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Approved For Release 2000/08/24 : CIA-RDP7

m. 40,661

s. 60,536

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Date: JUN 18 1963

Now, About This Mr. Donovan

All 13 members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee have joined in asking for a Congressional investigation of the role played by New York attorney James Donovan as successful negotiator for release of prisoners from Fidel Castro's Cuba. They aren't completely satisfied with the various official pronouncements that Mr. Donovan acted as a private individual, with no "overt assistance" from the federal government. Of even more interest just now are some implications recently that the lawyer may have a continuing assignment dealing with the larger aspects of U.S.-Cuban relations.

These House Republicans say there is

nothing "political" about their bringing up the Donovan case. However, we assume they will not refuse to accept any political benefits that may accrue from such an inquiry, in the unlikely event that it is conducted. (Mr. Donovan, it will be remembered, ran for Lieutenant governor of New York last year on the Democratic ticket, while the prisoner negotiations were under way; he was roundly defeated at the polls, which seems to indicate he is a better negotiator than politician.)

The contention that Congress should know what Mr. Donovan has to do with our relations with Castro's Cuba, if anything, sounds reasonable enough even though a great deal has gone on in that shadowy field of operations (by the Central Intelligence Agency, for example) that neither the Congress nor the American people will ever get to hear about.

However, the difficulty is that Congress, while it includes many highly discreet gentlemen, also has some blabber-mouths. If Mr. Donovan is doing something useful for our government in a field where some useful work is clearly needed, his ability to continue will be severely inhibited if Congress gets let in on the secret. That remarkably adept horse-trader (who also swapped a Soviet spy for U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers) could be a valuable permanent addition to the ranks of the cloak and dagger boys; every once in a while we get a hint that they need such competent help.

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